

Are Environmental Odors TOXIC?

Just because it smells does not mean it is toxic.



Odors and General Well-Being

Odors may affect communities.

Some chemicals give off strong odors, making people feel sad and upset. The odors reduce their quality of life and sense of well-being.

Exposure to Environmental Odors

Odors can cause:

- Symptoms: headaches; dizziness; memory loss; and nausea. Symptoms improve when the odors decrease.
- Visible signs: watery eyes; stuffy nose; irritated throat; and coughing and wheezing in people with asthma and other chronic lung diseases.
- Psychological effects: depression and sadness. The ambient odor might make them feel helpless.
- Sleep problems: People may not sleep well due to irritation symptoms (e.g., nasal congestion; scratchy throat; and coughing).

Sensitive Populations

Not everyone reacts to environmental odors the same way, in general, children, the elderly and women may be more sensitive to odors, also, some personality types and people with asthma or other chronic lung conditions.

What Makes the Effects of Odors Worse?

Outdoor activities (e.g., outdoor exercise; participating in sports; and playing or working outside) may make people feel worse.

How to Prevent Exposure to Odors?

- Do not exercise outdoors during bad odor days.
- Stay indoors when your asthma and/or chronic lung problems are acting up.
- Try and get away from the odors for a few hours by leaving the area

Levels of Odors

Most odors in the air are not at levels that cause disease and the symptoms from odors are generally reversible.

Some Sources of Odors

Semiconductor manufacturing companies	Ammonia; Acetone; and Isopropyl alcohol
Food processing plants; Livestock feeding facilities; and Paper mills	Hydrogen sulfide
Wood treatment facilities	Pentachlorophenol and Creosote
Petroleum refineries	Hydrogen sulfide; Sulfur oxides; Benzene; Toluene; and Xylene
Landfills	Hydrogen sulfide

Some Odorous Chemicals

